



King County
Rural Forest Commission

Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting Thursday, March 10, 2016, Preston Community Center

Commissioners present: Nate Veranth, forest landowner (Chair), Bernie McKinney, Green River Coalition (Vice Chair); Dick Ryon, forester; Andy Chittick, forest landowner/sawmill operator; Amy LaBarge, forest ecologist; Grady Steere, Campbell Global; Steven Mullen-Moses, Snoqualmie Indian Tribe; Monica Paulson Priebe, Green River College; Daryl Harper, small forest landowner; Martie Schramm, Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest; Brandy Reed, King Conservation District

Guests: Mike Lasecki, King Conservation District (KCD); Jarret Griesemer, KCD

King County Staff: Richard Martin, Water & Land Resources Division; Jeff McMorris, Council staff; Linda Vane, Commission Liaison

Chair Nate Veranth called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Motions

Motion 1- 0316 That the minutes of the January 21, 2016 meeting be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

Highlights of the Green-Duwamish Symposium, Feb. 2016: Building connections/sharing methodologies

Bernie McKinney, President, Green River Coalition

Bernie McKinney reported that the symposium was highly successful. Over 240 scientists and conservationists came together for a full day to focus on the Green-Duwamish Waterway. Bernie said that one of the benefits of the symposium was that it brought together individuals and organizations from throughout the watershed to share knowledge and success stories. According to Bernie, many organizations and agencies work to improve conditions in specific locations in the watershed.

Bernie said that the symposium sponsors' ultimate goal was to promote actions that would connect habitats that have become fragmented, recognizing that what happens in the upper watershed matters very much for downstream conditions. Attendees learned about current research, including a University of Washington effort to develop a profile of the Middle Green and its influence on water flows in the lower watershed. The trend is more rain and higher stream flows which will affect run off, fish and many other factors in the watershed, he said, ten-year floods will become three-year floods.

Bernie said that discussions included work toward a shared vision of restoring the watershed. One of the outcomes of the symposium would be development of an interactive map to help supporters and volunteers learn about the many projects taking place in the watershed, he said. Presentations would be available [online](#) at a future date, according to Bernie.

Ecosystem Services Analysis: Applications

Monica Paulson Priebe, Instructor, Green River College

Monica Priebe presented a follow-up to the ecosystem services presentation at the January 21, 2016 Rural Forest Commission meeting. She observed that the questions and interests expressed by the commission at the last meeting were highly diverse. Generally ecosystem services are defined as the benefits gained

by humans from ecosystems, such as clean water, climate control, pollination, and opportunities for recreation. She provided a refresher on the economic concepts that commonly employed in ecosystem services analyses, such as “externalities” and various means of assigning dollar value to natural resources or, for example, determining the costs vs. the benefits of managing natural resources. She explained that cost/benefit analysis is an approach that attempts to weigh the pros and cons of a project in order to understand potential trade-offs. The King County [2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan](#) includes this type of analysis.

Monica also explained some of the challenges in designing ecosystem services analysis. For example, currently there are no standard inputs to the ecological economics equations, making direct comparisons between systems impossible. In the absence of a standard methodology, she said that values can be used in the way that a biodiversity index is used, to compare alternatives as long as the same valuation method is used to quantify each of the alternatives.

An extensive discussion ensued. Among the comments were the following:

- One could look at ecosystem services analysis from the perspective of economic development. Are we throwing away valuable ecosystem services in the interest of economic development? If we are, it would be nice to analyze the value of what we are giving away as well as what we are getting in return.
- It should be recognized that ecosystem services involve the interests of more than those who own the land in question. There are other interested parties out there besides the landowner who would be getting benefits from the land; neighbors and the public, for example. Would they have standing to claim the value of those services?
- Having an ecosystem services analysis could help the county determine which pieces of land to target for acquisition, including easements, or where to invest in incentives.
- It's important to determine who would be willing to actually pay for a given ecosystem service. For example, who would be willing to pay for leaving that tree in place?
- Consider focusing discussion on services that mitigate actions that have negative environmental outcomes. An example might be the Green-Duwamish, which has a healthy upper watershed and a lower watershed that is highly degraded. Could there be a transfer of some of the credit for conservation as funds exchanged within the watershed?
- From a forest landowner's considerations, such as net present value or return on investment, one could use like a tool for making judgements about things like when to cut trees. This could be particularly useful on larger pieces of land have more ecosystem services than we realize.

The commission decided to bring in presenters to provide examples of ecosystem services analysis in actual practice, such as Seattle Public Utilities Tolt River Watershed plan and the King County Strategic Climate Action Plan.

King County Parks Update

David Kimmett

Natural Resource Lands Program, King County Parks and Recreation Division

David Kimmett provided an update on the Parks Division's Forest Stewardship Program. The county's park system is very large, with approximately 28,000 acres of public open space on more than 200 different sites and within that, 25,000 acres of forest. Forested areas can be found in parks with recreational areas, multi-use open spaces and working resource lands. Policy that are of special importance for forest management in the park system are the Rural Forest Commission's 2009 [Actions Required for King County to Conserve Rural Forests](#), and the [2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan](#).

David described the goals for the Forest Stewardship Program as follows:

- healthy and resilient public forest lands
- ongoing stewardship through partnerships
- public use and enjoyment
- public education and engagement
- sustainable management

David said that six sites in the park system, totaling 3,677 acres, are designated as working resource lands (forests). These are managed in partnership with the county's Forestry Program. All are managed according to forest stewardship plans. Timber harvests conducted primarily to thin over-crowded stands have been undertaken at Taylor Mt, Ring Hill, Island Center Forest and Dockton Forest. Parks is beginning to plan for forest management activities on some of the public open spaces, particularly those that may not have been actively maintained before being acquired by Parks, said David.

A discussion ensued concerning the implications of the composition and age of many of the forest stands on Parks lands. Much of the discussion concerned forest management challenge presented by the lack of age and structural diversity observed in a significant portion of the parks system where natural succession patterns have been interrupted. The Parks Division's ultimate objective is to restore forests to a healthy and resilient condition, according to David.

Staff and Agency Reports and Announcements

Rural Forest Commission Administration – Linda Vane provided an update on the King County email accounts that were being set up for the new commission members.

Snoqualmie Forest – Grady Steere reported that Campbell Global would now manage the Snoqualmie Forest. The recreation program would be continued and would be similar to that of the prior management. There would be a new website and questions about the recreation program should be sent to sqrecreation@campbellglobal.com.

King Conservation District (KCD) – Brandy Reed introduced Mike Lasecki, the KCD's new Rural Forest Health Management Program Coordinator, who would be responsible for designing a forest stewardship program to assist private landowners with 5 acres or less of forest cover on their property. Also introduced was Jarret Griesemer, intern to the new KCD Urban Forest Stewardship Program. Jarret would be working on forming partnerships with cities to undertake forest health management projects in urban areas.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

A one-hour orientation session for new commission members was held after the commission meeting.

Next meeting

The next meeting will be held on May 12, 2016, at the Preston Community Center.

Commission Liaison:

Linda Vane

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